

SOUTHWESTERN POWER ADMINISTRATION PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: SWPA Statement on Coronavirus (COV-19)

March 16, 2020 Contact: Beth Nielsen **Phone:** 918-595-6762 **Email:** elizabeth.nielsen@swpa.gov

Statement on SWPA Preparation for Coronavirus (COV-19)

Tulsa, OK – Southwestern Power Administration (Southwestern or SWPA) is taking active measures to protect its employees and the community at large while making sure that the lights stay on and the grid stays resilient during the coronavirus outbreak.

“SWPA is taking our work-related guidance from the Office of Personnel Management (OPM), the Department of Energy (DOE), the Department of State, and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention,” says Southwestern Administrator Mike Wech. “We have reviewed our Pandemic Continuity Plan contained within the SWPA Continuity of Operations Plan (COOP) to ensure its adequacy to address the specific threat, including assessment of the necessary personnel and resources for maintaining business continuity.”

Wech says the safety of Southwestern employees is of the utmost importance, and he has provided guidance that travel will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis and that teleconference meetings are preferred over face-to-face to limit exposure. Additionally, the agency has ordered additional supplies such as hand sanitizers, wipes, surgical masks, and gloves to protect employees.

Access to Southwestern’s primary operations center has been restricted to only personnel who are stationed there, and operators, along with all employees at Southwestern, are required to sanitize and disinfect their shared duty stations when reporting for duty and leaving their shifts.

In a March 12, 2020 all-hands meeting regarding Southwestern’s response to the outbreak, employees were reminded of good hygiene habits, such as washing hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, avoiding touching eyes, nose, or mouth with unwashed hands, taking advantage of hand sanitizer, limiting outside visitors, and visiting a doctor and taking sick leave when necessary.

Danny Johnson, Senior Vice President of Corporate Compliance, informed attendees at the all-hands meeting that Southwestern would be conducting a test of its connectivity bandwidth by having a 100% telework day for eligible staff the following week. “SWPA has an essential mission as far as DOE is concerned,” Johnson explained. “We want to test our system while we don’t need it, so when we do, we’ll know it will be there for us and that we can continue achieving our mission.”

Johnson also said that Southwestern will be conducting succession planning and delegation training with its managers to ensure that operations can continue in the event an employee becomes ill or otherwise incapacitated.

Employees were reminded that the COOP plan was available for viewing on the agency’s internal web site and that senior leadership and health and safety personnel review, test, and

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revise the plan on a regular basis. “The SWPA COOP plan includes response levels that help guide our decision-making process,” says Administrator Wech. “Employees should expect additional updates as more information becomes available and the situation continues to evolve.”

Wech and other members of senior leadership have been coordinating with Southwestern’s industry partners and other Federal agencies. There are daily calls with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, DOE, other Power Marketing Administrations, OPM, the North American Electric Reliability Corporation, the Southwest Power Pool, and other stakeholders in the electric utility industry.

Wech says that, while Southwestern’s senior leadership and other officials are doing everything they can to make sure people stay safe and the lights stay on, everyone has a role to play. “People can help prevent the spread of flu, coronavirus, and other infectious diseases by treating their bodies well to keep their immune systems healthy and taking steps to limit the spreading of germs and illness.”

As of the date of this press release, Southwestern has had no confirmed cases of coronavirus (COV-19).

Southwestern Power Administration is an agency of the U.S. Department of Energy. Its mission is to market and reliably deliver Federal hydroelectric power with preference to public bodies and cooperatives. This is accomplished by maximizing the use of Federal assets to repay the Federal investment and participating with other water resource users in an effort to balance their diverse interests with power needs within broad parameters set by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and implementing public policy. For more information, see <http://www.swpa.gov>.